

THIRD DISTRICT REPORT- JESSE HARRIS

Housing- We are operating out of three houses. Two are leased for six months and one of them is rented at \$32 a month. The houses that we lease cost \$100 a month. It cost us \$900 to get Freedom House One repaired after it was bombed. We are checking the insurance now to see if we can get the money back.

Cars- There are two cars operated by ministers working on the project which belong to the NCC. Aside from that there is one staff car and one car belonging to a volunteer. Both these cars are registered with the SNCC fleet.

Finances- Our present allotment from the Jackson office is \$100 every two weeks. It is impossible to run the project on this, but we have established contact with ministers coming down to work and get \$10 from each one when he arrives. This is how we can operate.

On October 26 we took about 30 local people down to the courthouse to register. About 18 local people and most of the staff and ministers were arrested. We were able to make contact with outside sources for bail money.

At the present time we have no back bills, but we also have only \$12 in our treasury and something like \$2100 tied up in court, with \$700 in our bond fund. This money must eventually be returned to the people who put it up. To close, if it hadn't been for the ministers to help we would not have been able to operate, and we are trying to establish our own support. That is, if Jackson, Atlanta, and Africa don't help us.

Personnel- At the present time we have about 12 people working on the project. About six, including myself, receive \$9.00 a week from SNCC, whenever it comes. Three staff people will be leaving in January. On the whole we have little personnel problems. Some of the staff do have big ideas about the way the movement ought to be run, but we have been able to use one of the "brothers technique".

Freedom At the present time we have approximately 19-21 students who are presently involved in conducting a play about working out a trip to New York during the Christmas holidays. They are also responsible for getting churches in the community to hold MSU meetings.

Voter Registration - Since we have been in McComb we have been able to take about 300 people down to the courthouse to register. About 15 have passed so far. We have been conducting about three block meetings a week, with six blocks operating. From the voter registration activities we have been able to recruit people to bring over food to the house.

Community Center- About two months ago we met with about 12 businessmen from McComb to talk about building a community center. Since then we have had a number of other meetings and have decided to build a \$20,000 community center. We are using our contacts with the ministers to help us, since during their stay in McComb they became acquainted with the idea and need for a community center. A letter was sent out to about 70 ministers asking them to contribute \$100 apiece for the project. One man in Wilton, Connecticut has asked me to come and speak about the community center, and perhaps the Wilton council on Human Relations will adopt the project. I talked to Dave Brubeck personally and he has agreed to do a benefit with some of his friends on December 5th to raise money for the community center.

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Freedom Democratic Party - The MFDP in Pike County operates with about 15 people. These people come from various parts of the county. They have been operating mainly with a strong push from the staff. We plan to expand FDP work here, and have already had precinct, district, and county meetings.

Federal Programs - This is still in the research stage. A couple of our staff are working on this in Amite county, and have had a few meetings.

Part Two-COFO

For the past four years we have been talking about making COFO work as a state organization. This has not happened and I think it is because staff people have identified themselves as COFO. They have not given the community the programs, the responsibilities, and the identity to carry out a state organization. The newspapers have identified the staff, the volunteers, and everybody who works in civil rights as COFO, and we have not tried to correct this. With this type of attitude and relationship COFO could not work in the twenty years to come. For example, we have been responsible for calling mass meetings, organizing various parts of the community, and introducing different programs to the community. In other words, we have been running COFO. We have not taken the time to ask the local people what they would like to see COFO do. Now I'm not saying that the programs that we have introduced are not good, but what I'm saying is that the people have not participated in choosing them. The communities that we work with all over the state know that we have various types of support-money, legal aid, contact with the news media, and with some parts of the federal government. We have not given these contacts to the local communities. I have no solutions to these problems, but I hope that sometime in the nearest future we will start working these problems through. I wish I could say more, but my ability to speak is somewhat handicapped.

Third District- We have four projects going in the third district.

Jackson- It is hard to operate a project in Jackson because more emphasis has been placed on the state office. That is to say, most of the people there want to disassociate themselves from the Jackson project. There are four people there now, but none are staff, and they have little money to operate on. We need more money and more cooperation.

Vicksburg- There are nine people working on the Vicksburg project. They have problems carrying out the present programs because of the community environment. They are working with the Warren County Improvement League, NAACP, and with other organizations that have not been functioning with the COFO programs. Johnny Fergusson can tell more about this.

Natchez- Natchez is operating with very little support from Jackson, from SNCC, and the local organizations. Chico will tell you about this.

Yours in COFO,

Jesse Harris